

village was at about half a kilometer.

The distribution of Rustyspotted Cat in India is based only on a few reports about its occurrence: Chakraborty (1978) in Jammu and Kashmir, Pathak (1990) in Gujarat, Chavan *et al.* (1991) in Gujarat, Tehsin (1994) in Rajasthan, Digveerendrasinh (1995) in Madhya Pradesh, Acharjyo *et al.* (1997) in Orissa, Dubey (1999) in Maharashtra, and Rao *et al.* (1999) in Andhra Pradesh. Although the species is reported to be widespread, from southern India to some parts of Kashmir (Prater 1998), the only published report from southern India was from Andhra Pradesh (Rao *et al.* 1999). However, Mukherjee (1998) mentions its occurrence in Mundanthurai plateau on the basis of personal communications from field researchers. Mudappa (pers. comm.) reported its occurrence in Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary. Our report confirms its occurrence in the state of Karnataka.

All published papers on Rustyspotted Cat are only occurrence reports, and no detailed studies are available on this species. However, each of such reports contributes in understanding its distribution, locality and habitat type. Hence, the present sighting is important, since it marks the 'southern most sighting location' of its distribution in India. The scrub forests of Nugu Wildlife Sanctuary and its edges continuing

with croplands had only few tall trees of more than 5 m in height. Since the Rustyspotted Cat is an arboreal species, inhabiting scrub forests, grasslands, and ruins near villages (Gurung and Singh 1996; Prater 1998), special attention must be paid to the maintenance of large trees dispersed throughout such regions where it occurs, as such trees are essential to provide a viable habitat for this species.

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3. DISAPPEARANCE OF ELEPHANTS IN UTTARA KANNADA

We carried out a survey of mammals in Uttara Kannada, Karnataka, between February and April, 2002. During a walk of 198 km in several regions, in addition to direct sightings, the locals, officials of the Public Works Department and Karnataka Forest Department were interviewed to gather information on the occurrence of different animal species in each region. We found that an elephant herd had disappeared from Gersoppa region. Locals and officials stated that during 1992, two elephants were found dead in the backwaters of the

Gersoppa Dam. In 1995, three more elephants were found dead in the water. Only one old adult male was left that used to range in the forests between Mastimane and Votehalla on Joga-Gersoppa road. During our survey, we had also found dung and signs of fresh movement of the elephant. But this elephant was also reported dead by the end of 2002. The details on the death of this elephant were not available and not revealed by anyone. However, there are no elephants in the region anymore.

Nair and Gadgil (1978) had reported a herd of elephants from the Gersoppa region that used to range north of River Sharavati, especially in the forests at Badal, Jankadkal, Medini, Herebail, Mahime and Gersoppa. A few herds of elephants were also reported south of Sharavati river at Meginavalley, Kollur Ghat and Nagavalli. Towards the north, a few herds were reported from Dandeli forest area. Nair and Gadgil (1978) also reported two elephants that were shot dead on the banks of Sharavati.

The disappearance of the elephant herd from Gersoppa region has created a more than one hundred kilometre gap between the existing populations at Meginavalley (in the south) to Dandeli (in the north). This is one more example of the local disappearance of a species. It is such processes that

result in population fragmentation, and isolation between populations. Another notable result of such local extinctions is also the reduced overall area of occupancy of a species.

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4. MANDARIN DUCKS *AIX GALERICULATA* (LINNAEUS) ON THE SAT TAL LAKES NEAR NAINITAL, UTTARANCHAL

The Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* is an East Asian species whose native breeding range is restricted to the eastern part of Russia, northern China and Japan. Its main wintering areas are in the lowlands of eastern China and southern Japan. There is also an introduced feral population in the United Kingdom (Madge and Burn 1988).

In the Indian subcontinent, the Mandarin Duck is a very rare winter vagrant (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). It has only been recorded once in Nepal and once in Bangladesh (Gardiner 1991; Grimmett *et al.* 1998). There are only two records of Mandarin Duck from India, both from the northeast and more than 50 years old. One Mandarin Duck was observed in Assam (Baker 1902), and one in Manipur (Grimson 1934). All observations of Mandarin Ducks from the Indian subcontinent, except the one from Nepal, were at low altitudes.

On February 13, 1999 we were bird watching around Nainital (1940 m above msl), Uttaranchal, northern India. We were counting birds on the lakes of Sat Tal, situated in a hilly wooded area at an elevation of 1300-1450 m above msl (Kazmierczak and Singh 1998). On the lake near the Christian Ashram, we observed three Mandarin Ducks (1 male, 2 females). The birds were very shy and flew away each time we approached within 100 metres, so we used a telescope to observe them. The male was in colourful breeding plumage, which is unmistakable and cannot be confused with any other duck species (see Madge and Burn 1988; Svensson *et al.* 1999). The three observed Mandarin Ducks were the only duck or waterbird species recorded in the area on that day.

This is the third known record for India, and the first in the last 50 years. Except for the observation from Nepal it is

also the highest record (1400 m above msl) from the region. According to the available data on the species distribution (Madge and Burn 1988), the observation from the Sat Tal lakes is the westernmost record for Mandarin Ducks from its native Asiatic population.

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